

Senator Claire McCaskill:

Mr. President, the United States is so lucky to have the senior Senator from Maryland in this august body. She is smart and feisty, and she is not willing to yield any ground when she thinks the people she represents are not being treated as they should be.

For women in this country, she has been a tremendous beacon of light and hope to finally get over some of the barriers that have held women back historically. So to the dean of the Senate women, I thank her for her leadership as we work on this checklist for change.

One of the things we want to check off the list is fiscal accountability. It sounds kind of boring, fiscal accountability. It sounds like this is where the numbers drone on and one loses track.

This is a big deal. This administration has driven us into an economic ditch. The numbers, frankly, are so big it is hard to believe they are real. Federal spending since President Bush took office has increased by almost \$1 trillion. Let me say that again. Federal spending under this President and under the leadership of the Republican Party has increased by \$1 trillion. Our debt has gone up by \$3.7 trillion. We now have a debt of \$9.3 trillion.

This is change that is not just important, it is urgent. We must be fiscally accountable for taxpayer money. It sounds nice, right? It is a moral imperative for our kids. It is the right thing to do for the generation that comes behind us, for our children and grandchildren. We are presenting them with a train wreck of unprecedented proportion if we don't get our fiscal house in order.

So how do we do that? The Checklist for Change is all about being tough and accountable with taxpayer money. The way you do that is: First, how do you spend it? Do you give out contracts based on whom you know? This administration has. Is it about cronyism? Too often it has been. Is it about no competition? Unfortunately, yes. Is it about cost-plus contracts? As a former auditor, I will tell you, cost-plus contracts have no place in Government. Cost-plus means, hey, you can charge the Government whatever you want, and then you get to make money on top of that.

Believe it or not, that is the kind of contracting that ruled the day in Iraq. As we were faced with a war that we did not have enough men and women to fight, we had to contract out such as our country has never contracted out in a time of war. What happened? We lost--and I am being conservative now because auditors are conservative by nature--literally, over \$150 billion that went up in smoke to waste, fraud, and abuse.

War profiteering. There has been an orgy of war profiteering during this conflict in Iraq. If we focused on the Department of Defense and the way they contract, we could realize enough savings so every young person in America could have help going to college, so every young child in America could have preschool--if we paid attention to the way we do contracting in the Department of Defense.

I will tell you, today is a good day. I wish to say to my colleagues, today is a good day because today a decision was rendered that shows we can get it right if we force companies to compete and we enforce the provisions of those contracts.

A major, expensive contract was the tanker deal at the Department of Defense. There was a competition--good news. A company was awarded the contract--fine. There were problems. So what happened? The losing company went to GAO, under our process of procedures, and said: Auditors, take a look at this. You tell us whether this contract was done fairly.

The good news is, GAO, as it always does, did its work professionally, and they announced their decision today and said Boeing was, in fact, treated unfairly in the tanker deal, that Boeing did not get a fair shake under that competitive contract, and that, in fact, the Air Force must change its decision as it relates to Boeing and the tanker deal.

Do I think that is important? Yes. But why is it important? It is important because what we have said from the beginning is compete these contracts. Do it fairly. Respect taxpayer money. Get a bargain. That is what women in America relate to because we are all about getting a bargain for our families. We need to treat taxpayer money the same way.

I am proud to be part of the Checklist for Change. I am proud to be emphasizing fiscal accountability.

I yield the floor.